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## Missouri launches 2010 Census Web site

*Groups say the English-only Web site is ineffective.*

**By Rachel Krause**

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As part of Gov. Jay Nixon's mission to count all Missourians in the upcoming census, a new state Web site was launched to raise awareness about the issue, but some say the English-only Web site fails to reach the state's non-English speaking communities.

The 2010 census is important for Missouri because projections show the state might lose a Congressional seat due to stunted population growth.

State demographer Matt Hesser, who is responsible for reporting Missouri's census information to the U.S. Bureau, said in a report for each person not counted during the census, the state loses roughly \$1,000 annually.

The Missouri Office of Administration organized the Web site, spokeswoman Lori Simms said, with the goal of increasing awareness about the Missouri Complete Count Committee. She said the CCC, which is made of 26 community leaders, is trying to get their message out.

"The Web site is for those looking to organize in their community," Simms said. "But it is also for normal citizens interested in learning more about the 2010 census and why it's so important to get everyone counted," Simms said.

Simms said she is unsure as to whether the Web site will offer new language options in the future.

"Determining which languages make sense for Missouri's needs and obtaining those translation services are our biggest obstacles to offering more languages on the Web site," she said.

Jennifer Rafanan, executive director of Missouri Refugee and Immigration Advocates in St. Louis, said this might prove to be an obstacle for non-native English speakers who might not be familiar with the census and a translated version of the site would be useful.

"I definitely think it would be helpful for those still learning English because they are coming across a whole new vocabulary of terms that they may be unfamiliar with," Rafanan said.

Rafanan also said illegal immigrants are often fearful of filling out government forms. But she said community leaders are trying to better inform these people and others about the census.

"Through these outreach efforts I have noticed a definite uptake in interest and knowledge throughout the Latino community concerning the matter," Rafanan said.

Eduardo Crespi, director of Columbia-based Latino outreach organization, Centro Latino, is frustrated with the lack of Spanish on the website.

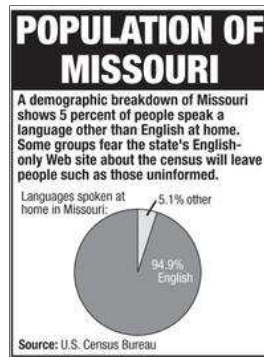
"I think the Web site should be offered in different languages, especially in Spanish," Crespi said. "Hispanics are the second largest minority group in Missouri and it is important that all of us are counted."

Crespi, who volunteered for the 2000 census, said he saw problems 10 years ago that have gone unresolved.

"It looks like history is going to repeat itself in that not all Latinos are going to be counted," Crespi said.

Emily Smith, special assistant to the commissioner in the Office of Administration, said though a translation of the Web site might help minorities become better informed, there are many effective approaches toward educating hard-to-reach groups about the census, such as local organizers and volunteer workers who directly meet with members of the community.

"The Web site is not necessarily a 'one-stop shop' for those under-represented groups," Smith said. "Online media is just one of the many ways of reaching out to those groups."



Katie Prince/Graphic Designer |

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